

T A R R A N T C O U N T Y

Ex-Offender Reentry Initiative

EX-OFFENDER RE-ENTRY TO TARRANT COUNTY



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The Reentry of Former Prisoners to Tarrant County

Introduction

This report sets out to present data concerning the recent trends regarding the extent and nature of ex-inmate reentry to Tarrant County. The data presented in this report was obtained from the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) via an Open Records request submitted in April, 2007, on behalf of the Tarrant County Administrator's office.

TDCJ reports that during 2006, at least 71,214 persons were released from correctional institutions back into communities throughout Texas. This report presents data concerning individuals that have been *released* from incarceration to Tarrant County. TDCJ defines a person as released to Tarrant County whenever one of the two following circumstances apply: a) the released inmate has identified Tarrant County, TX as their county of residence or, b) upon release, the inmate has been placed on parole within Tarrant County. A declaration that Tarrant County is the county of residence does not guarantee that an individual will return to Tarrant County. However, TDCJ does not currently collect destination data from inmates that are *not* released to some form of community supervision. Hence, we can only surmise that upon release from incarceration, *most* formerly incarcerated persons are returning to their declared county of residence.

Key Terms

Releases - Offenders leaving TDCJ due to the *discharge* of their sentence or to another form of supervision.

Discharge Releases - Prison offenders who are released from TDCJ either by *full expiration* of their sentence or by court order.

Discretionary Mandatory Supervision (DMS) - A type of release from prison provided by law for restricted categories of offenders. Offenders with offenses committed on or after Sept. 1, 1996 who are released from

prison under mandatory supervision contingent upon approval by a Board of Pardons and Paroles panel vote.

Mandatory Supervision (MS) - A type of release from prison provided by law for restricted categories of offenders. Eligible offenders are released on MS when their calendar time served added to their good time credits equals the length of their prison sentence. Under the law in effect until August 31, 1996, release to MS was automatic, with no requirement of release approval from the Board of Pardons and Parolees.

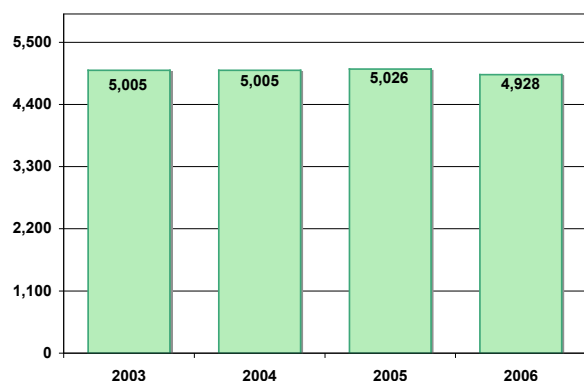
Parole - The conditional release of an offender from prison, by a Board of Pardons and Paroles decision, to serve the remainder of his/her sentence under supervision in the community.

Prison Offenders - Offenders with capital, first, second or third degree felony convictions.

State Jail Offenders - Offenders convicted of State Jail Felony Offenses. An individual adjudged guilty of a State Jail felony offense may be confined in a State Jail facility for a term of no more than two years or less than 30 days. *There is no parole or mandatory supervision release from State Jail.*

Substance Abuse Felony Punishment Facility (SAFPF or SAFP) Offenders - Offenders who are sentenced by a judge as a condition of community supervision or sent by the Board of Pardons and Paroles as a modification of parole supervision to an intensive six-month therapeutic community program (nine-month program for offenders with special needs).

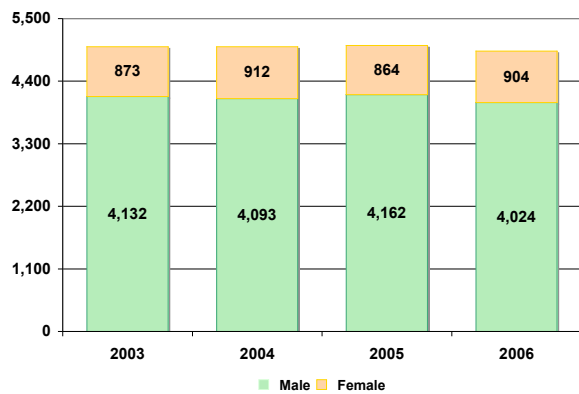
Figure 1. Ex-inmates released from TDCJ to Tarrant County



As reported in Figure 1, at least 5,000 individuals per year have been released from incarceration with TDCJ to Tarrant County between 2003 and 2005. During 2006, there was a slight decline in the total number of persons released to Tarrant County (4,928).

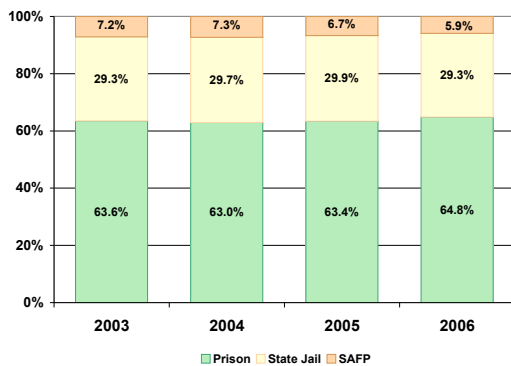
The gender distribution of formerly incarcerated persons returning to Tarrant County, (reported in Figure 2), denotes that between 2003 and 2006 more than 80% of the total population returning annually were male and that females only accounted for as much as 18.3% (during 2004).

Figure 2. Gender Distribution



Formerly Incarcerated Persons (FIP's) returning to Tarrant County are released from a variety of TDCJ facilities located throughout Texas. These include State Jails, State Prisons, and Substance Abuse Felony Punishment Facilities (SAFP). As noted in Figure 3, well over half of all FIPs annually returning to Tarrant County between

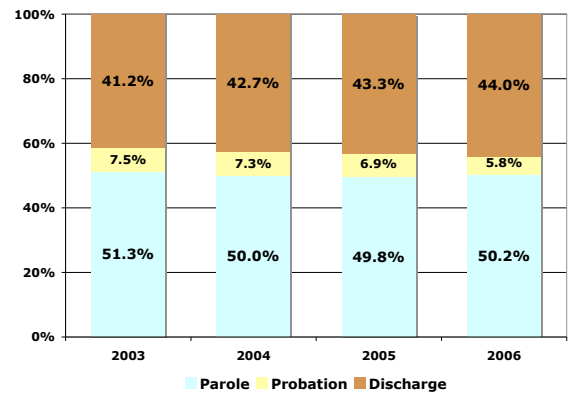
Figure 3. Facility Type for TDCJ inmates returning to Tarrant County



2003 and 2006 came from State Prisons. During 2006 for example 3,194 FIPs (65%) returned to Tarrant County from a State Prison facility. During the same year, slightly less than a third, (1,445) returned from a State Jail facility, and 6% (289) returned from SAFP's.

In addition to being released from different types of institutions, ex-inmates returning to Tarrant County are released under a variety of conditions. The conditions effectively determine the nature and extent of any supervision upon their release. Generally speaking, the variety of conditions available can be collapsed into three categories. Figure 4 below reports the annual distribution, (2003-2006) of ex-inmates returning to Tarrant County across the three general categories of release.

Figure 4. Type of Release for TDCJ inmates returning to Tarrant County



As noted in Figure 4, most FIPs returning to Tarrant County return on parole and are subject to some form of supervision. This category includes individuals released under regular parole, released under MS and DMS, as well as individuals that are released to parole from SAFP facilities. During 2006 a total of 2,475 ex-inmates (or, 50.2% of the annual total) were released on parole to Tarrant County from TDCJ facilities.

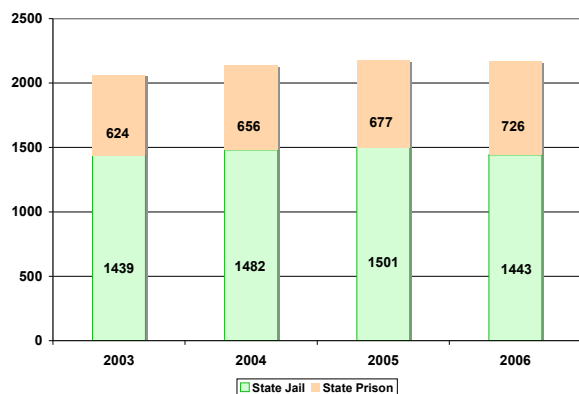
Although probation is most commonly used a mechanism for community supervision and / or diversion prior to incarceration, in certain cases individuals may be required to complete their probation sentence upon release from incarceration. During 2006, a total 274 ex-inmates (or, 5.8% of the annual total) were released on probation. This category includes individuals released on probation from state jails and/or state prisons, as

well as, individuals released on probation from SAFF facilities. For example, of the 274 released on probation, 25 individuals (0.5% of the annual total) were released from either state jails or state prisons and 259 individuals (5.3% of the annual total) were released from SAFF institutions.

The second largest category of FIPs returning to Tarrant County are discharge releases. FIPs that are discharged have served their full sentence and are no longer under the jurisdiction of TDCJ. Despite a relative stability in the overall annual number of FIPs returning to Tarrant County between 2003 and 2006, the annual *proportion* of FIPs discharged to Tarrant County during this time has steadily increased. As noted in Figure 4, during 2003, 41.2% (or, 2,063) of the annual total released were discharged releases. In 2006, 44% (or, 2,169) of the annual total released were discharged releases.

Overall, between 2003 and 2006 over 2,000 FIPs per year have been discharged to Tarrant County. The data presented in Figure 5, reveal that annually, (between 2003 and 2006), more than half of the FIPs discharged to Tarrant County were returning from State jails. In 2006, a total of 1,443 (or 29.3% of the annual total released) returned from State jail. During the same year, 726 (or, 14.7% of the annual total released) returned from State prisons.

Figure 5. TDCJ Facility origin for inmates Discharged to Tarrant County

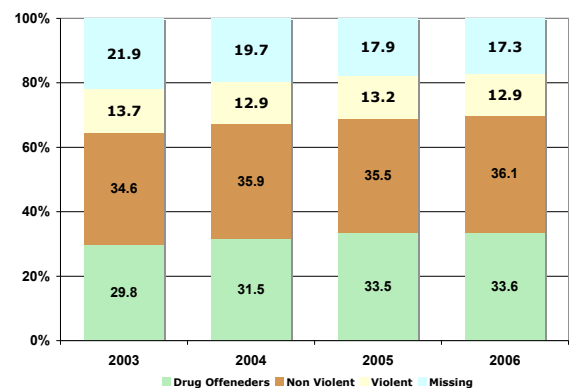


With regard to the specific types of offenders returning to Tarrant County, it is noted that available data show that less than 14% of ex-inmates returning to Tarrant

County (between 2003 and 2006) were classified as *violent* offenders. More importantly, the data denote that between 2003 and 2006 the overwhelming majority of annual returnees to Tarrant County were in fact classified as either drug offenders or as nonviolent offenders. For example in 2006, 69.7% of the population returning to Tarrant County were nonviolent or drug offenders.

As shown in Figure 6, between 2003 and 2006 slightly over a third of the formerly incarcerated population annually returning to Tarrant County were consistently classified as nonviolent offenders. Similarly, drug offenders consistently represented roughly a third of the annual total population returning to Tarrant County between 2003 and 2006.

Figure 6. Offense of record for TDCJ inmates Returning to Tarrant County



It is noted that a fourth category appearing in Figure 6 denotes a *missing* category. That is, ex-inmates for which no offense classification can be made. Clearly the annual proportion of unclassifiable offenders is higher than the annual proportion of offenders classified as violent, and if it were that these persons were in fact violent offenders it would dramatically affect the proportion of violent offenders returning to Tarrant County. However, in consideration of the the security and safety risks associated with violent offenders, we surmise that a *missing* offense of record is most likely to be a non-violent offense rather than a violent offense. Stated differently, violent offenders or inmates with a history of violence are the *least* likely to be mislabeled or unidentified within TDCJ.

Project Name:	Tarrant County Reentry Initiative Charter
Initial Date of Project:	March 10, 2006
Executive Steering Committee Chair:	Commissioner Roy C. Brooks, Pct. No. 1
Advisory Committee Chair:	TBD

Project Charter

The charter and bylaws are developed and supported by the Tarrant County Administrator's Office and ratified by the Tarrant County Commissioners Court upon the recommendation of the Reentry Council Executive Steering Committee. This charter serves as the governing instrument for the Tarrant County Reentry Initiative. It defines the scope of the project, the management structure, and the roles and responsibilities of its membership. Project groups and teams operate in many different ways depending on project objectives, technical needs, resource requirements and, availability. This document establishes the manner in which these groups and teams are structured by defining the functions, expectations and accountability of team members. These guidelines minimize the risk that the project will be derailed as the result of error, misunderstanding or miscommunication.

Reentry Council Executive Steering Committee

The Tarrant County Reentry Council Executive Steering Committee is APPOINTED BY TARRANT COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT and is chaired by a Tarrant County Commissioner. It is subject to the rules of the Tarrant County Boards and Commissions Policy. The committee consists of county, city, state and federal executives, elected officials, educational officials and community representatives throughout Tarrant County. This group is not considered a *de facto* working group, but its members are identified as champions of the Tarrant County Reentry Initiative and can offer significant resources and support as needed (See Attachment A for a list of recommended membership). The Tarrant County Reentry Council Executive Steering Committee will serve as an advisory committee regarding the policies and procedures outlined in this document.

Tarrant County Reentry Council Advisory Committee

The Tarrant County Reentry Council Advisory Committee (RCAC) is established by its membership and functions as an advisory group to the TARRANT COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT. The RCAC leadership consists of a chair (and a co chair (as needed)), elected by simple majority of the RCAC membership. The RCAC membership consists of reentry subcommittee chairs. The Tarrant County Reentry Council Advisory Committee is responsible for:

- Assuring that the Tarrant County Reentry Initiative remains a countywide collaborative effort between local government, community agencies and organizations, nonprofits, the private sector, community leaders and faith-based organizations.

- Providing the Tarrant County Administrator with insight and/or recommendations for guiding principles, planning strategies, and resources to further the purpose and mission of the Tarrant County Reentry Initiative.
- Reviewing and providing feedback regarding all programs and/or project work plans contained within the Tarrant County Reentry Initiative.

Mission

To facilitate the collaboration of Tarrant County community groups, public health officials, treatment providers, educational institutions, legislators, human services groups, housing officials, workforce development groups, faith-based organizations, families, former inmates, victims advocates, law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, courts and correctional agencies to develop a planning strategy for the effective reintegration of ex-offenders, thereby reducing recidivism, supporting victims and promoting public safety in Tarrant County.

Goals

The goal of the Tarrant County Reentry Council Advisory Committee is to provide input and feedback in regard to all activities related to the implementation and management of the Tarrant County Reentry Initiative as related to the following:

- Linking reentry program participants to sustainable employment through effective training, education and employer development thereby meeting offender, community and employer needs;
- Assessing the availability of external funding sources for reentry programs and projects;
- Attaining external funding for reentry programming and projects;
- Linking reentry program participants to adequate transitional housing;
- Linking reentry program participants to mental health treatment and services;
- Linking reentry program participants to substance abuse treatment and services;
- Supporting and/or recommending proposed legislation, policies and practices that will facilitate the successful reintegration of formerly incarcerated persons;
- Linking reentry program participants to trained mentorship;
- Development of a Tarrant County mentorship curriculum;
- Linking reentry program participants to positive peer networks;
- The identification of resources available in the Tarrant County community that can increase the capacity of organizations to provide services for formally incarcerated persons and their families; and
- Educating the general public regarding the significance of, and need for, strategies and programs that address the needs of persons in reentry.

Activities

The RCAC membership will serve as chairpersons of respective, content-specific reentry subcommittees. Reentry subcommittees will address the following substantive areas¹ as they relate to the successful reintegration of the formerly incarcerated:

- Employment/Vocational Development;
- Evidence-Based Practices;
- Housing;
- Mental Health;
- Health Care;
- Substance Abuse;
- Policy and Law;
- Community Support Systems;
- Faith Based Support Systems; and
- Transitional Preparation.

The advisory group subcommittee's activities and recommendations are submitted to the RCAC and may be used in the development, implementation and management of the Tarrant County Reentry Initiative.

Tarrant County Reentry Council Advisory Committee Bylaws

Section A: Regular Meetings

Regular Meetings of the RCAC: The Tarrant County Reentry Council Advisory Committee should endeavor to hold bimonthly meetings (6 meetings per year). The annual schedule of meeting dates should be determined by the Reentry Council Advisory Committee during its first annual regular meeting.

Regular Meetings Reentry Subcommittees: Each RCAC Reentry Subcommittee should endeavor to meet bimonthly (6 meetings per year). The annual schedule of meeting dates should be determined by each respective subcommittee chair. In the effort to encourage public attendance at RCAC subcommittee meetings, meeting information (to include date, time and location) should be made available for posting on the Tarrant County Reentry Initiative website. Subcommittee chairs shall be responsible for maintaining a list of citizens interested in their subcommittee and assuring that these citizens are invited to each subcommittee meeting.

¹ Other reentry subcommittees may be created as per the recommendation of the Tarrant County Administrator's Office.

Section B: Designees

In the event of an anticipated absence, Tarrant County Reentry Council Advisory Committee members should designate a respective subcommittee member to represent them and vote at regular meetings. Any member wishing to appoint a designee is to identify the designee and formally communicate this to the designee and the Chair of the RCAC. Designees can be changed only by notifying the Chair in writing.

Section C: Members

Tarrant County Reentry Council Advisory Committee (RCAC) - includes eleven (11) voting members. The membership of this committee is composed of the chairpersons from each respective reentry subcommittee (10) and, the immediate past Chair (1) of the reentry council. Members of the RCAC will elect a chair and a co-chair by simple majority.

Section D: Reentry Subcommittees

The Reentry Subcommittees (cf. Attachment B) are the forum for community input regarding ex offender reentry. As such, the membership of Reentry Subcommittees should represent a countywide collaboration open to all Tarrant County residents. Members of Reentry Subcommittees may serve indefinitely. Members are not, however, voting members of the RCAC.

Section F: Quorum

All actions of the Tarrant County Reentry Council Advisory Committee shall be decided by a simple majority vote. A quorum of not less than 50% of the RCAC members present is needed to vote. Designees shall be counted when determining a quorum.

Section G: Convening Special Meetings

The Chair of the Reentry Council Advisory Committee may convene special meetings. However, written notice must be served at least 48 hours in advance.

Section H: Chair, Co-Chair and Subcommittee Chairs

Chair: The Chair of the Reentry Council Advisory Committee (RCAC) is a member of the RCAC, the Presiding Officer of the RCAC, nominated by the RCAC, and is elected by a simple majority of the RCAC membership. The Chair serves for a term of one (1) year.

Co-Chair: The RCAC Co-Chair is a member of the RCAC is appointed by the Chair and serves on an as-needed basis. For example, in instances when the Chair cannot attend a meeting, the Co-Chair presides over the meeting.

Reentry Council Advisory Committee (RCAC) Sub-Committee Chairs: The Reentry Subcommittee Chairs are members of the RCAC, are nominated by the preceding subcommittee chair and are elected by a simple majority vote of the RCAC membership. The reentry Subcommittee Chair will serve for a term of one (1) year. In instances when the Reentry Subcommittee Chair cannot facilitate and/or attend a meeting, a designated representative must preside over the subcommittee.

Section I: Voting

Each RCAC member has one (1) vote. Designees may vote on behalf of a member if the chair of the RCAC has been formally notified of the substitution. Under normal circumstances, RCAC subcommittee members are not members of the RCAC and have no vote.

Section J: Parliamentary Authority

Robert's Rules of Order, revised, govern all committee meetings, except in instances of conflict between the Rules of Order and the Bylaws of the Steering Committee or a provision of law.

Section K: Amendment of Bylaws

Any and all proposed amendments to the Bylaws are to be submitted to the Commissioners Court as recommended by the executive steering committee. Amendments shall be effective after approval and shall continue until such time as the Commissioners Court deems it necessary or proper to terminate such.

Attachment A

These are recommendations for the Tarrant County Reentry Council Executive Steering Committee. The recommendations are subject to the approval of the Commissioners Court.

1. Member of U.S. Congress
2. U.S. Attorney Northern District of Texas
3. Member of the Texas Legislature
4. Texas Department of Criminal Justice Parole Division Regional II Director
5. Tarrant County Judge
6. Tarrant County Administrator
7. Eighth Administrative Judicial Region, Presiding Judge
8. Tarrant County Sheriff
9. Tarrant County District Attorney
10. Fort Worth Police Chief
11. Arlington Police Chief
12. Tarrant County College District, Chancellor
13. Texas Wesleyan University, President
14. University of Texas at Arlington, President
15. Texas Christian University, Chancellor
16. Workforce Solutions for Tarrant County, Director
17. United Way of Tarrant County, CEO

Attachment B

This is a list of the reentry subcommittees that are part of the RCAC. The descriptions appearing beneath each subcommittee title are not meant to be comprehensive or definitive in nature. It is expected that each subcommittee will develop its own agenda for activities related to its respective content area and that the subcommittees will collaborate on their efforts.

Employment/Vocational Development:

The Employment/Vocational Development Subcommittee is responsible for identifying strategies, programs, partnerships and activities that can effectively increase the number of employers in Tarrant County willing to hire persons recently released from incarceration and, identifying strategies, programs, partnerships and activities that can effectively increase the number of formerly incarcerated persons that are successfully hired in Tarrant County.

Evidence-Based Practices:

The Evidence-Based Practices Subcommittee will gather information on existing techniques, strategies, assessment tools, educational curricula and motivational curricula that have evidence of success in their application with persons during reentry from institutionalization. This subcommittee will provide recommendations for augmenting the Tarrant County Reentry Initiative based on their findings.

Housing:

The Housing Subcommittee is responsible for identifying strategies, programs, partnerships and activities that will increase the number and quality of housing resources available for the reentry population of Tarrant County.

Mental Health:

The Mental Health Subcommittee is responsible for identifying strategies, programs, partnerships and activities that will help to assure that the reentry population of Tarrant County has unencumbered access to available mental health services within Tarrant County.

Substance Abuse:

The Substance Abuse Subcommittee is responsible for identifying strategies, programs, partnerships and activities that will help to assure that the reentry population of Tarrant County has unencumbered access to the substance abuse services and therapeutic treatment available within Tarrant County.

Policy and Law:

The Policy and Law Subcommittee is responsible for developing proposed legislation, policies and practices that will facilitate the reentry of formerly incarcerated individuals

and protect the community while creating a mechanism for implementing recommended changes.

Faith-Based Support Systems:

The Faith-Based Support Systems Subcommittee is responsible for assuring that the Tarrant County Reentry Initiative includes partnerships and collaborations with the faith-based communities of Tarrant County and their endeavors to provide services and support for the reentry population of Tarrant County.

Transitional Preparation:

The Transitional Preparation Subcommittee is responsible for identifying strategies, programs, partnerships and activities that will successfully prepare inmates (prior to release from incarceration) for the reentry process.

Community Support Systems:

The Community Support Systems Subcommittee is responsible for identifying strategies, programs, partnerships and activities help address the social service needs of the reentry population of Tarrant County.

Health Care:

The Health Care Subcommittee is responsible for identifying strategies, programs, partnerships and activities that will help to assure that the reentry population of Tarrant County has unencumbered access to all health services available within Tarrant County.